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S E C R E T KINSHASA 10141

NODIS CHEROKEE

FROM MULCAHY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, AO, GB, US

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH GOG PRESIDENT BONGO--ARMS FOR GABON
AND ANGOLA

SUMMARY: IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, I ASSURED
GOG PRESIDENT BONGO NOVEMBER 23 OF USG DESIRE TO BE RESPONSIVE
TO HIS REQUEST FOR ARMS ASSISTANCE FOR GABON AND FOR
ANTI-MPLA FORCES IN ANGOLA. IN LIGHT USG ASSURANCES, BONGO
SAID HE INTENDED CONCERT WITH MOBUTU TO PREPARE FOR
EARLY RECOGNITION OF FNLA-UNITA REGIME BY LARGEST
POSSIBLE NUMBER OF OAU MEMBER STATES. END SUMMARY.

1. MET WITH GOG PRESIDENT BONGO FOR NEARLY TWO HOURS
NOVEMBER 23 TO DISCUSS PRESIDENT'S EARLIER REQUEST TO USG FOR
ARMS ASSISTANCE FOR GABON AND FOR ANTI-MPLA FORCES IN
ANGOLA. GOG FOREIGN MINISTER OKUMBA, GOG AMBASSADOR TO
ZAIRE MEHALEY, AND AMBASSADOR STEIGMAN ALSO PRESENT.

2. BONGO OPENED SESSION WITH 45-MINUTE MONOLOGUE, IN
COURSE OF WHICH HE COVERED FOLLOWING TOPECS: (A) GOG
VIEW OF SITUATION IN ANGOLA, STRESSING MASSIVE SOVIET
AID TO MPLA AND RESULTING DANGER THAT COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED
REGIME WILL ACHIEVE POWER IN WHOLE COUNTRY; (B) THREAT
WHICH THIS SITUATION POSES TO GABON, WHICH ALREADY FACES

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TWO REGIMES OF HOSTILE IDEOLOGY ON ITS BORDERS (GONGO-

BRAZZAVILLE AND EQUATORIAL GUINEA); CABON'S CONSEQUENT NEED FOR ARMS, INCLUDING "SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS", TO ASSURE ITS OWN DEFENSE, PARTICULARLY SINCE IT HAS SENT SOME OF ITS OWN ARMS STOCK TO ANGOLA FOR USE BY FNLA UNITA FORCES; (D) REVIEW OF US-GABONESE RELATIONS, INCLUDING EXPRESSION OF HOPE THAT USG WOULD BE ABLE PROVIDE ASSISTANCE WITH GABON REQUIRES AT THIS CRITICAL TIME; AND (E) STATEMENT OF READINESS TO RECOGNIZE FNLA-UNITA REGIME ONCE GABON'S OWN SECURITY ASSURED BY PROMISE OF ARMS AID.

3. BONGO NOTED THAT GOG HAS RECEIVED OFFERS OF ARMS ASSISTANCE FROM SOVIET UNION (AND HE HAD PREVIOUSLY REPORTED SIMILAR OFFER FROM DPRK), BUT HAS HAD TO PAY CASH FOR WEAPONS AND MATERIAL RECEIVED FROM NON-COMMUNIST SUPPLIERS. FRENCH, HE SAID, HAVE PROMISED HIM MILITARY GRANT AID SINCE 1972, BUT HAVE NEVER DELIVERED; THUS, HE HAS HAD TO BUY MIRAGES AND HELICOPTERS WHICH HE HAD HOPED TO RECEIVE AS GIFT. SIMILARLY, HE HAS BOUGHT NUMBER OF AIRCRAFT IN US. SOVIETS, HOWEVER, HAD SIMPLY ASKED HIM TO PROVIDE THEM LIST OF HIS REQUIREMENTS, OFFER WHICH HE COUNTERED BY TELLING SOVIET AMBASSADOR THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WAS WELCOME TO SEND WHATEVER ARMS IT WISHED BUT HE (BONGO) WOULD NOT ASK THEM FOR HELP.

4. IN DISCUSSING US-GABONESE RELATIONS, PRESIDENT LAID HEAVY EMPHASIS ON NUMBER OF TIMES HE HAS RESPONDED TO USG REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE OR SUPPORT WITHOUT DEMANDING QUID PRO QUO. HE PARTICULARLY CITED HELP HE PROVIDED SEVERAL YEARS AGO AS USG GO-BETWEEN WITH CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE; HIS SUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO CALM CAR PRESIDENT BOKASSA AND TALK HIM OUT OF LAUNCHING ANTI-US ATTACK; HIS ADVICE TO MOBUTU TO DROP HIS RECENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST US FOR ALLEGED "PLOT"; AND HIS CONSISTENT SUPPORT FOR SOUTH KOREAN POSITION AT UNGA (BABON CO-SPONSORED FRIENDLY RESOLUTION). THIS SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE, BONGO SAID, WERE NOT OFFERED IN ANTICIPATION OF GETTING SOMETHING IN RETURN, BUT BECAUSE PRESIDENT CONSIDERED THAT THINGS USG ASKED WERE ALSO IN GOG'S OWN INTEREST--IMPORTANT EVIDENCE, IN HIS VIEW, THAT OUR TWO COUNTRIES SHARE COMMON PERCEPTION OF MANY KEY ISSUES.

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TM PRESIDENT CONCLUDED HIS PRESENTATION BY AFFIRMING HIS READINESS MOVE RAPIDLY TO STIMULATE AFRICAN SUPPORT FOR FNLA-UNITA REGIME IF GABONESE SECURITY CAN BE ASSURED BY SUPPLY OF ARMS. IF COUNTRIES LIKE US AND FRANCE UNABLE OR UNWILLING RESPOND TO HIS APPEALS FOR ASSISTANCE, THIS WOULD NOT MEAN RADICAL SHIFT IN GOGON'S POLITICAL ORIENTATION. IT WOULD, HOWEVER, FORCE GOG TO GIVE GREATER WEIGHT TO

POTENTIAL THREAT FROM ITS IDEOLOGICALLY-HOSTILE NEIGHBORS WHEN IT ADOPTED POSITIONS ON WORLD ISSUES, AND THUS MIGHT SERIOUSLY LIMIT GABONESE ABILITY TO RESPOND POSITIVELY WHEN USG SEEKS GOG SUPPORT OR ASSISTANCE IN FUTURE.

6 IN REPLY, I INFORMED PRESIDENT BONGO THAT LATTER'S EARLIER REQUEST TO AMBASSADOR STEIGMAN FOR ARMS AID HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO PERSONAL ATTENTION OF SECRETARY KISSINGER, WHO HAS EXPRESSED DESIRE RESPOND POSITIVELY AND HAD DIRECTED CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF MODALITIES FOR BRINGING THIS ABOUT. THUS, I CONTUNED, DECISION IN PRINCIPLE HAD ALREADY BEEN TAKEN TO ASSIST GOG, THOUGH WAY OF DOING THIS REMAINED TO BE WORKED OUT.

7. IN LIGHT THIS FAVORABLE USG RESPONSE, PRESIDENT SAID, HW WOULD CONCERT WITH MOBUTU ON STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO INSURE PROMPT RECOGNITION OF FNLA-UNITA REGIME BY GREATEST POSSIBLE NUMBER OF OAU MEMBER STATES. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION, BONGO EXPRESSED VIEW THAT OAU SUMMIT WOULD PROBABLY BE HELD IN VERY NEAR FUTURE TO CONSIDER ANGOLAN SITUATION, BUT THAT IT WOULD FAIL TO FIND SOLUTION. IN WAKE SUCH SUMMIT FAILURE, HE JUDGED, OAU MEMBER STATES WOULD NO LONGER BE BOUND BY CURRENT INJUNCTION TO WITHHOLD RECOGNITION FROM CONTENDING REGIMES, AND STRONG SUPPORT FOR FNLA-UNITA GOVERNMENT AT THAT POINT COULD BE CRUCIAL FACTOR IN STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL OF ANGOLA. FONMIN OKUMBA NOTED THAT MPLA REGIME IS CLAIMING SPECIAL STATUS BECUASE IT IS ONLY GOVERNMENT IN ANGOLA TO HAVE RECEIVED ANY INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION, THESIS WHICH CONGO-BRAZZAVILLE IS PUSHING WITH SOME SUCCESS DESPITE ITS LACK OF JURIDCAL FOUNDATION. IN SUBSEQUENT HEADCOUT, BONGO AND OKUMBA ESTIMATED THAT MINIMUM OF 25 OAU MEMBER STATES COULD BE COUNTED ON OR
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PERSUADED TO GRANT RECOGNITION TO FNLA-UNITA REGIME (DETAILS SEPTTEL), WHICH WOULD PUT CLEAR MAJORITY OF AFRICAN OPINION IN THEIR CORNER AND THUS ATTRACT SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT FROM OTHER REGIONS OF WORLD.

8. TO MY QUESTION ABOUT PROPER ROLE FOR USG, BONGO EXPRESSED VIEW THAT OUR CURRENT POSTURE ON SIDELINES (A L'ECART) WAS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT. US, IN HIS VIEW, SHOULD NOT PLAY OVERT ROLE IN SUPPORT OF FNLA-UNITA AS SOVIETS HAVE DONE FOR MPLA, BUT SHOULD CONTINUE TO PROVIDE COVERT BACKING. (I ASSURED BONGO THAT NO US PERSONNEL ARE PRESENTLY IN ANGOLA.) HOWEVER, BONGO ADDED, USG SHOULD BE PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE FNLA-UNITA REGIME WHEN SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF AFRICAN STATES HAVE DONE SO, AND SHOULD ALSO BE READY TO URGE ITS FRIENDS THROUGHOUT WORLD TO DO LIKEWISE.

IN THIS REGARD, BONGO AND OKUMBA MADE PARTICULAR MENTION OF LATIN AMERICA, WITH CLEAR IMPLICATION THAT THEY WOULD COUNT ESPECIALLY ON US LOBBYING EFFORT IN THAT AREA.

9. BONGO NOTED IN PASSING,BUT DID NOT STRESS, HIS READINESS PROVIDE TRANSHIPMENT FACILITIES FOR ARMS DELIVERIES TO FNLA AND UNITA FORCES. HE NOTED THAT USAF PLANES COULD LAND AT LIBREVILLE BY NIGHT, AND THAT ARMS COULD BE TRANSSHIPPED TO GABONESE AIRCRAFT AND SENT ON BEFORE DAYBREAK, THUS ASSURING TOTAL DISCRETION FOR OPERATION. PRESIDENT RECALLED THAT GOBON HAD REVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN THIS FIELD FROM BIAFRAN DAYS,WHEN SIMILAR OPERATION HAD BEEN CARRIED ON SUCCESSFULLY FROM LIBREVILLE BASE.

10. AMBASSADOR MEBALEY PROVIDED CONCLUDING COMMENT THAT COMBINED INFLUENCE OF ONGO AND BOBUTU SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTMATED WHEN THEY DECIDED TO WORK TOGETHR FOR COMMON PURPOSE.THEY HAVE BECOME "TANDEM" IN CENTRAL AFRICAN LEADERSHIP IN WAY THAT SENGHOR AND HOUPHOUET-BOIGNY HAVE LONG STOOD AS "TANDEM" IN WEST AFRICA, MEBALEY SAID. THUS, NETWORK OF FRIENDSHIPS AND FAVORS ON WHICH THEY CAN DRAW WILL ASSURE SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT FOR FNLA-UNITA REGIME WHEN THEY GO INTO ACTION TOGETHER ON ITS BEHALF.

11. COMMENT: BONGO WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED WITH POSITIVE USG RESPONSE, WHICH HE CLEARLY FEELS WILL PERMIT HIM TO
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PROVIDE MORE OPEN BACKING FOR FNLA-UNITA REGIME AND GENERALLY TO CONTINUE HIS ROLE AS STRONG ADVOCATE OF MODERATION AND PRAGMATISM IN CENTRAL AFRICA.

12. HAVING RECEIVED POSITIVE RESPONSE, PRESIDENT WILL NOW BE EXPECTING RAPID USG ACTION TO DELIVER PROMISED ARMS AID. IN ORDER MAINTAIN FAVORABLE MOMENTUM AND ENCOURAGE BONGO IN HIS SUPPORT FOR FNLA-UNITA, STRONGLY RECOMMEND PROMPT DISPATCH TO LIBREVILLE OF RENCH-SPEAKING USG REPRESENTATIVE QUALIFED TO ASSESS GOG NEEDS AND EMPOWERED TO MAKE SPECIFIC COMMITMENT GO GABONESE FOR INITIAL SUPPLIES IN FULFILLMENT OF OUR PLEDGE. AT THIS POINT, QUICK DELIVERY OF EVEN TOKEN SHIPMENT WILL HAVE GREATEST IMPACT ON BONGO AND PROVIDE MAXIMUM BOOST TO HIS EFFORTS ON BEHALF FNLA-UNITA, AND WIL THEN ALLOW US TIME FOR MORE CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF POSSIBILITIES FOR SUPPLY OF "SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS" WHICH GOG PARTICULARLY SEEKS.

13. AS WE MOVE TOWARD ACTUAL DELIVERY, WE WILL NEED TO GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO INFORMING FRENCH OF OUR PLANS IN LIGHT THEIR CLOSE TIES TO GOG IN MILITARY FIELD. SINCE GOF

WILL ALMOST CERTINLY LEARN OF OUR ACTIVITES IN THIS
REGARD, ADVANCE NOTIFICATION TO THEM WHICH STRESSED
RELATIONSHIP OF GABON AID TO COMMON EFFORT IN ANGOLA WOULD
HELP ALLAY ANY GOF SUSPICION THAT WE MIGHT BE TRYING TO
UNDERCUT THEIR LONSTANDING POSITION IN GABON. SUBJECT
TO CONCURRENCE OF EMBASSY PARIS, SUGGEST BEST CHANNELS FOR
EVENTUAL DISCUSSIONS WITH GOF WOULD BE PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS
ADVISER JOURNIAC AT ELYSEE AND FRENCH AMBASSADOR DELAUNAY
IN LIBREVILLE, BOTH OF WHOM ENJOY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH
BONGO.
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